Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) Historical Interview

Marjorie Vogeley

On October 5th, Anjali Noronha, an occupational therapy student at Towson University, interviewed Margorie (Margie) Vogeley, occupational therapist and former president of the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA). Margie grew up in Stanford, Connecticut as a musically inclined child who loved to sing, so when it was time to go to college, she attended the Manhattan School of Music for a year. Her parents told her she would not be able to get a job as a music major, so she transferred to a community college. While studying there, Margie volunteered at the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center where she met an occupational therapist and began reading about the profession. She then decided that occupational therapy (OT) is what she wanted to do. She attended Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) as a music education major for a year, and then applied to their OT program and got admitted. The program was two years long with a nine-month clinical internship. Margie then completed a master’s degree in general administration at the University of Maryland, College Park.

In February 1980, Margie worked as a rehabilitation therapist in a hospital in Texas. She has also worked in home health, the Department of Defense, the school system, clinical pediatrics, and acute care and rehabilitation. She has been working for Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCS) since 1989, where she rotates between various schools to provide her services. She has not conducted any research.

Through her study of OT philosophy, Margie found the systems theory, occupational therapy practice framework (OTPF), and the Canadian occupational performance model ( COPM) to be very beneficial. Margie has also successfully used Brunnstrom’s and Bobath’s approach of “restraining the good limb to strengthen the weaker one” for rehabilitating patients with hemiplegia. She now uses the educational model while working in the school system. Regarding the history of OT, Margie states that before WW1, people viewed weakness in the body as separate from weakness in the mind. But after WW1, providing disabled people with things to do proved the therapeutic value of the link between the body and the mind.

There are certain people that have influenced and stood out in Margie’s career. She was never good at sharing, but her supervisor at PGCS taught her how to collaborate with others, be a team-player, and the concept of give-and-take. Margie also shared her touching and unforgettable experience with one of her patients- a diabetic, black man with a leg amputation in very poor shape. Margie not only worked with him until he could independently care for himself, but she taught him needlepoint to occupy himself even after his rehabilitation. After finishing therapy, the man was content with life as his son’s house (in which he was residing in) was completely adapted for him. Sadly, Margie’s patient passed away from electrolyte imbalance two days after being discharged. Even though it seems like Margie’s efforts went to waste, her patient died a happy man, which is all she could have asked for.

Political and social climates play a key role in practice. Although it did not affect her in the school system, Margie recalls the therapy cap in which insurance would only reimburse therapists a low set amount, because they do not want to pay for non-skilled therapy that anyone can do- insurance needs to see proper terminology and functional results. Additionally, when making therapy equipment for poorer clients, Margie says she had to “get it right the first time” because insurance would only cover one session. Communication is often difficult when working with uneducated parents as well.

Margie Vogeley was the president of the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) for six years as a volunteer. When she first joined, the association was old-fashioned, but she brought it into the 21st century through her publicization, recruitment, and advocacy. She also indicated that some technology was being used by the association, but under her presidency more technology was being used. As a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), Margie says the association plays in instrumental role in policy and state advocacy. It is also a good resource for clarification.

Margie offered advice to students in the form of a list

* + Don’t sweat the small stuff
  + Know your relaxation techniques
  + They want you to graduate so try
  + Job prospects are good
  + Don’t put too much importance on grades- more on skills
  + Lifelong learning process
  + Let others help you
  + Try to get along with everyone
  + Don’t be a pushover
  + Consider the patients family as well as the patient
  + First job- plan to stay at for a couple years at least
  + Keep good records of everything you’ve done

Mrs. Vogeley closed the interview by sharing why she has had a fulfilling career. She emphasizes that many people like the idea of attending a national conference, but do not really value their membership. Margie values the feeling of belonging over any social status that she has. The advice she gave me will stick with me throughout my academic career as an OT student: put more importance on learned skills than grades, always consider the patient’s family, OT job prospects are good, do not sweat the small stuff, plan to stay at your first job for a couple years, and keep good records of everything you have done.